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Statement of Brian S. Becker
State Representative for the 19th Assembly District
before the
Committee on General Law
Connecticut General Assembly
February 28, 2012
in support of
SB 59

An Act Concerning Retail Wine Sellers and Wine-Related Classes

Chairman Doyle, Chairman Taborsak, Ranking Member Witkos, Ranking Member Rebimbas, and the other distinguished members of the General Law Committee, thank you for raising and taking the time to hear testimony on SB 59, An Act Concerning Retail Wine Sellers and Wine-Related Classes.

Last year I visited a constituent of mine, Greg Nemmergut, at his store, West Side Wines, in West Hartford Center, to discuss his opposition to Sunday sales. Our meeting took place in a small classroom in his store. Mr. Nemmergut told me he had built the classroom to hold wine education classes, for a fee, in response to requests from his customers.

I thought holding fee-based wine education classes was a great idea. However, Mr. Nemmergut told me that liquor control agents told him that he could not do it. What a shame.

Here was a small businessman, listening to his customers and trying to accommodate their requests. Here was an entrepreneur trying to expand his business in difficult economic times and investing his own money to make it happen. Yet he could not.

I still think Mr. Nemmergut's idea is a great one, and so do other liquor store owners inside and outside of my district. You will hear from some of them today. Offering classes is a smart way for these small businesses to generate more revenue and to educate their customers.

I think the idea becomes even more compelling should this legislature choose to allow Sunday sales of alcohol. Many liquor store owners fear that allowing Sunday sales will cost them revenue. Allowing fee-based wine education classes would give them an opportunity to realize a new revenue stream that could help offset any negative effect Sunday sales might have on their small businesses.

Please support this bill. Thank you.